This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

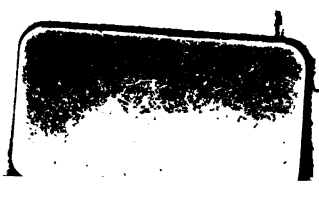
Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

175n.

Ex Libris
R. W. CHAPMAN

E. H. W. MEYERSTEIN
BEQUEST TO THE
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

This book
was acquired for the
MEYERSTEIN
COLLECTION
OF THE
ENGLISH FACULTY
LIBRARY
with the help
of a grant made under
this bequest



31792

XL 42.5 [Eng]

dozen 5/5/-

$7\frac{1}{2} \times 4\frac{3}{4}$. the copy [illegible] at Sotheby's 15 July 1929 [illegible]

£4:15:0

AN
ENQUIRY
INTO THE
PRESENT STATE
OF
POLITE LEARNING.

Εμοι προς φιλοσοφους εστι φιλια· προς μεν τοι σοφιστας ἡ γραμματιστας· ουτε νυν εστι φιλια μητε υστερον ποτε γενοιτο.

Tolerabile si Ædificia noſtra diruerent Ædificandi capaces.

AN ENQUIRY INTO THE PRESENT STATE OF POLITE LEARNING IN EUROPE.

By OLIVER GOLDSMITH, M.B.

THE SECOND EDITION,
Revised and Corrected.

LONDON:
Printed for J. DODSLEY, in PALL-MALL.

MDCCLXXIV.

THE

CONTENTS.

CHAP. I.

INTRODUCTION, Page 1

CHAP. II.

The Cauſes which contribute to the decline of learning, p. 5

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

A view of the obſcure ages. p. 25

CHAP. IV.

Of the preſent ſtate of polite learning in Italy, p. 34

CHAP. V.

Of polite learning in Germany, p. 41

CHAP. VI.

Of polite learning in Holland, and ſome other countries of Europe, p. 51

CHAP.

CHAP. VII. VIII.

Of polite learning in France, p. 62

CHAP. IX.

Of learning in Great-Britain, p. 81

CHAP. X.

Of rewarding Genius in England, p. 85

CHAP. XI.

Of the marks of literary decay in France and England, p. 110

CHAP. XII.

Of the ſtage, p. 126

CHAP.

CHAP. XIII.

On Univerſities, p. 137

CHAP. XIV.

The Concluſion, p. 152

AN

It will now probably be ſaid that taking the decay of genius for granted, as I do, argues either reſentment or partiality. The writer, poſſeſſed of fame, it may be aſſerted, is willing to enjoy it without a rival, by leſſening every competitor; or, if unſucceſsful, he is deſirous to turn upon others the contempt which is levelled at himſelf, and being convicted at the bar of literary juſtice, hopes for pardon by accuſing every brother of the ſame profeſſion.

Sensible of this, I am at a loſs where to find an apology for perſiſting to arraign the merit of the age; for joining in a cry which the judicious have long ſince left to be kept up by the vulgar, and for adopting the ſentiments of the multitude in a performance that at beſt can pleaſe only a few.

therto unattempted in criticiſm, perhaps it is the only ſubject in which criticiſm can be uſeful.

How far the writer is equal to ſuch an undertaking the reader muſt determine; yet, perhaps, his obſervations may be juſt, though his manner of expreſſing them ſhould only ſerve as an example of the errors he undertakes to reprove.

Novelty, however, is not permitted to uſurp the place of reaſon; it may attend, but ſhall not conduct the enquiry. But it ſhould be obſerved that the more original any performance is, the more it is liable to deviate; for cautious ſtupidity is always in the right.

CHAP.

As in the beſt regulated ſocieties, the very laws which at firſt give the government ſolidity, may in the end contribute to its diſſolution, ſo the efforts, which might have promoted learning in its feeble commencement, may, if continued, retard its progreſs. The paths of ſcience, which were at firſt intricate becauſe untrodden, may at laſt grow toilſome becauſe too much frequented. As learning advances, the candidates for its honors become more numerous, and the acquiſition of fame more uncertain; the modeſt may deſpair of attaining it, and the opulent think it too precarious to purſue; thus the taſk of ſupporting the honour of the times may at laſt devolve on indigence and effrontery, while learning muſt partake of the contempt of its profeſſors.

innovations, though offered under the ſpecious titles of improvement.

LEARNING, when planted in any country, is tranſient and fading, nor does it flouriſh till ſlow gradations of improvement have naturalized it to the ſoil. It makes feeble advances, begins among the vulgar, and riſes into reputation among the great. It cannot be eſtabliſhed in a ſtate at once, by introducing the learned of other countries; theſe may grace a court, but ſeldom enlighten a kingdom. Ptolemy Philadelphus, Conſtantine Porphyrogeneta, Alfred, or Charlemagne, might have invited learned foreigners into their dominions, but could not eſtabliſh learning. While in the radiance of royal favour, every art and ſcience ſeemed to flouriſh; but when that was withdrawn, they

tion, as was the caſe of Arabia, learning ſeems coeval, ſympathizes with its political ſtruggles, and is annihilated in its diſſolution.

But permanence in a ſtate, is not alone ſufficient; it is requiſite alſo for this end that it ſhould be free. Naturaliſts aſſure us, that all animals are ſagacious in proportion as they are removed from the tyranny of others; in native liberty, the elephant is a citizen, and the beaver, an architect; but whenever the tyrant man intrudes upon their community, their ſpirit is broken, they ſeem anxious only for ſafety, and their intellects ſuffer an equal diminution with their proſperity. The parallel will hold with regard to mankind; fear naturally repreſſes invention; benevolence, ambition; for in a nation of ſlaves, as in

We muſt now examine what haſtens, or prevents its decline.

THOSE who behold the phænomena of nature, and content themſelves with the view without enquiring into their cauſes, are perhaps wiſer than is generally imagined. In this manner our rude anceſtors were acquainted with facts; and Poetry, which helped the imagination and the memory, was thought the moſt proper vehicle for conveying their knowledge to poſterity. It was the poet, who harmonized the ungrateful accents of his native dialect, who lifted it above common converſation, and ſhaped its rude combinations into order. From him the orator formed a ſtile, and though poetry firſt roſe out of proſe, in turn it gave birth to every proſaic excellence. Muſical period, conciſe expreſſion, and

it was every man's duty to know. Thus learning was encouraged, protected, honoured, and, in its turn, it adorned, ſtrengthened, and harmonized the community.

But as the mind is vigorous and active, and experiment is dilatory and painful, the ſpirit of philoſophy being excited, the reaſoner, when deſtitute of experiment, had recourſe to theory, and gave up what was uſeful for refinement.

Critics, ſophiſts, grammarians, rhetoricians, and commentators, now began to figure in the literary commonwealth. In the dawn of ſcience, ſuch are generally modeſt, and not entirely uſeleſs; their performances ſerve to mark the progreſs of learning, though they ſeldom contribute to its improvement. But as nothing but ſpeculation

AGAINST ſo obſtinate and irrefragable an enemy, what could avail the unſupported ſallies of genius, or the oppoſition of tranſitory reſentment? In ſhort, they conquered by perſevering, claimed the right of dictating upon every work of taſte, ſentiment, or genius, and at laſt, when deſtitute of other employment, like the ſupernumerary domeſtics of the great, made work for each other.

THEY now took upon them to teach poetry, to thoſe who wanted genius; and the power of diſputing, to thoſe who knew nothing of the ſubject in debate. It was obſerved, how ſome of the moſt admired poets had copied nature. From theſe, they collected dry rules, dignified with long names, and ſuch were obtruded upon the publick for their improvement. Common

ſenſe

blockheads talk, but all the lemmata of the Lyceum are unable to give him feeling.

But it would be endleſs to recount all the abſurdities, which were hatched in the ſchools of thoſe ſpecious idlers; be it ſufficient to ſay, that they encreaſed as learning improved, but ſwarmed on its decline. It was then, that every work of taſte was buried in long comments, every uſeful ſubject in morals was diſtinguiſhed away into caſuiſtry, and doubt and ſubtilty characterized the learning of the age. Metrodorus, Valerius Probus, Aulus Gellius, Pedianus, Boethius, and an hundred others, to be acquainted with whom, might ſhew much reading, and but little judgment; theſe, I ſay, made choice each of an author, and delivered all their load of learning on his back; ſhame to our anceſtors,

rated from common ſenſe, and made the proper employment of ſpeculative idlers. Men bred up among books, and ſeeing nature only by reflection, could do little, except hunt after perplexity and confuſion. The public, therefore, with reaſon rejected learning, when thus rendered barren, tho' voluminous; for we may be aſſured, that the generality of mankind never loſe a paſſion for letters, while they continue to be either amuſing or uſeful.

It was ſuch writers as theſe, that rendered learning unfit for uniting and ſtrengthening civil ſociety, or for promoting the views of ambition. True philoſophy had kept the Græcian ſtates cemented into one effective body, more than any law for that purpoſe; and the Etrurian philoſophy, which prevailed in the firſt ages of Rome, inſpired

breakfaſt, though even cooked by Ariſtotle. As the philoſopher grew uſeleſs in the ſtate, he alſo became contemptible. In the times of Lucian, he was chiefly remarkable for his avarice, his impudence, and his beard.

UNDER the auſpicious influence of genius, arts and ſciences grew up together, and mutually illuſtrated each other. But when once Pedants became lawgivers, the ſciences began to want grace, and the polite arts ſolidity; theſe grew crabbed and ſour, thoſe meretricious and gawdy; the philoſopher became diſguſtingly preciſe, and the poet, ever ſtraining after grace, caught only finery.

THESE men alſo contributed to obſtruct the progreſs of wiſdom, by addicting their readers

turity, or the age of philoſophers; and its decline, or the age of critics. In the poetical age, commentators were very few, but might have, in ſome reſpects, been uſeful. In its philoſophical, their aſſiſtance muſt neceſſarily become obnoxious, yet, as if the nearer we approached perfection, the more we ſtood in need of their directions, in this period they began to grow numerous. But when polite learning was no more, then it was thoſe literary lawgivers made the moſt formidable appearance. *Corruptiſſima republica, plurimæ leges.* TACIT.

BUT let us take a more diſtinct view of thoſe ages of ignorance, in which falſe refinement had involved mankind, and ſee how far they reſemble our own.

CHAP.

feſſors of them, more abſtruſe and deeper enquiry into every philoſophical ſubject, and a greater ſhew of ſubtilty and cloſe reaſoning, than in the moſt enlightened ages of all antiquity. But their writings were mere ſpeculative amuſements, and all their reſearches exhauſted upon trifles. Unſkilled in the arts of adorning their knowlege, or adapting it to common ſenſe, their voluminous productions reſt peacefully in our libraries, or, at beſt, are enquired after from motives of curioſity, not by the ſcholar, but the virtuoſo.

I AM not inſenſible, that ſeveral late French hiſtorians, have exhibited the obſcure ages in a very different light; they have repreſented them, as utterly ignorant both of arts and ſciences, buried in the profoundeſt darkneſs, or only illuminated with

About the tenth century, flouriſhed Leo the philoſopher. We have ſeven volumes folio of his collections of laws, publiſhed at Paris, 1647. He wrote upon the art military, and underſtood alſo aſtronomy, and judicial aſtrology. He was ſeven times more voluminous than Plato.

Solomon, the German, wrote a moſt elegant dictionary of the Latin tongue, ſtill preſerved in the univerſity of Louvain; Pantaleon, in the lives of his illuſtrious countrymen, ſpeaks of it in the warmeſt ſtrains of rapture. Dictionary writing was, at that time, much in faſhion.

Constantine Porphyrogeneta, a man univerſally ſkilled in the ſciences. His tracts on the adminiſtration of an empire, on tactics, and on laws, were publiſhed

geometry, publiſhed ſome years ſince at Paris.

MICHAEL PSELLUS lived in this age, whoſe books in the ſciences, I will not ſcruple to aſſert, contain more learning than thoſe of any one of the earlier ages: his erudition was indeed amazing, and he was as voluminous as he was learned. The character given him by Allatius has, perhaps, more truth in it than will be granted by thoſe who have ſeen none of his productions. There was, ſays he, no ſcience with which he was unacquainted, none which he did not write ſomething upon, and none which he did not leave better than he found it. To mention his works, would be endleſs. His commentaries on Ariſtotle alone amount to three folios.

BERTHOLDUS

out to ten at leaſt; but Lambertus might have had too much modeſty.

By this time, the reader perceives the ſpirit of learning, which at that time prevailed. The ignorance of the age was not owing to a diſlike of knowledge, but a falſe ſtandard of taſte was erected, and a wrong direction given to philoſophical enquiry. It was the faſhion of the day to write dictionaries, commentaries, and compilations, and to evaporate in a folio, the ſpirit that could ſcarce have ſufficed for an epigram. The moſt barbarous times had men of learning, if commentators, compilers, polemic divines, and intricate metaphyſicians, deſerved the title.

I have mentioned but a very inconſiderable number of the writers in this age of

CHAP. IV.

Of the preſent ſtate of polite learning in Italy.

FROM ancient we are now come to modern times, and in running over Europe, we ſhall find that, wherever learning has been cultivated, it has flouriſhed by the ſame advantages as in Greece and Rome; and that, wherever it has declined, it ſinks by the ſame cauſes of decay.

DANTE, the poet of Italy, who wrote in the 13th century, was the firſt who attempted to bring learning from the cloiſter into the community, and paint human nature in a language adapted to modern manners. He addreſſed a barbarous people in a method ſuited to their apprehenſions; united pur-

lite learning, and not far ſurpaſſed in others.

THEY ſoon however fell from emulating the wonders of antiquity into ſimple admiration. As if the word had been given when Vida and Taſſo wrote on the arts of poetry, the whole ſwarm of critics was up; the Speroni's of the age attempted to be aukwardly merry; and the virtuoſi and the Naſcotti ſat upon the merits of every cotemporary performance. After the age of Clement VII. the Italians ſeemed to think that there was more merit in praiſing or cenſuring well, than in writing well; almoſt every ſubſequent performance ſince their time being deſigned rather to ſhew the excellence of the critic's taſte than his genius; one or two poets indeed ſeem at preſent born to redeem the honour of their country. Metaſtaſio has reſtored

reſtored nature in all her ſimplic
Maffei is the firſt that has i
a tragedy among his countrymen
love-plot. Perhaps the Sampſon
ton, and the Athalia of Racine,
have been his guides in ſuch an at
But two poets in an age are not ſuffi
to revive the ſplendor of decaying geni
nor ſhould we conſider them as the ſtanda
by which to characterize a nation. O
meaſures of literary reputation muſt b
taken rather from that numerous claſs o
men who, placed above the vulgar, are
yet beneath the great, and who confer
fame on others without receiving any por-
tion of it themſelves.

In Italy, then, we ſhall no where find
ſtronger paſſion for the arts of taſte, yet n
country making more feeble efforts to pro
mot

mote either. The Virtuoſi and Filoſofi ſeem to have divided the Encyclopedia between each other. Both inviolably attach'd to their reſpective purſuits, and from an oppoſition of character, each holding the other in the moſt ſovereign contempt. The Virtuoſi, profeſſed critics of beauty in the works of art, judge of medals by the ſmell, and pictures by feeling. In ſtatuary hang over a fragment with the moſt ardent gaze of admiration; though wanting the head and the other extremities, if dug from a ruin the *Torſe* becomes ineſtimable. An unintelligible monument of Etruſcan barbarity cannot be ſufficiently prized; and any thing from Herculaneum becomes rapturous. When the intellectual taſte is thus decayed, its reliſhes become falſe, and, like that of ſenſe, nothing will ſatisfy, but what is beſt ſuited to feed the diſeaſe.

POETRY is no longer amo
imitation of what we ſee, bu
viſionary might wiſh. The ze
the moſt exquiſite perfume, th
eternal verdure; fauns, and
hamadryads, ſtand ready to fan
ſhepherdeſs, who has forgot inde
tineſſes with which Guarini's ſh
have been reproached, but is ſo
innocent, as often to have no
Happy country, where the pa
begins to revive! Where the w
of Rome are united into a rural g
nymphs and ſwains under the appell
modern Arcadians. Where, in th
of porticos, proceſſions, and caval
abbés turned ſhepherds, and ſhepher
without ſheep, indulge their innocent
timenti.

THE Filoſofi are entirely different from the former. As thoſe pretend to have got their knowledge from converſing with the living and polite, ſo theſe boaſt of having theirs from books and ſtudy. Bred up all their lives in colleges, they have there learned to think in track, ſervilely to follow the leader of their ſect, and only to adopt ſuch opinions, as their univerſities, or the inquiſition, are pleaſed to allow. By theſe means, they are behind the reſt of Europe, in ſeveral modern improvements. Afraid to think for themſelves; and their univerſities ſeldom admit opinions as true, till univerſally received among the reſt of mankind. In ſhort, were I to perſonize my ideas of learning in this country, I would repreſent it in the tawdry habits of the ſtage, or elſe in the more homely guiſe of bearded ſchool-philoſophy.

CHAP.

OF POLITE LEA

CHAP.

Of polite learning in G

IF we examine the ſtate
Germany, we ſhall find
mans early diſcovered a paſ
literature; but unhappily, lik
who, invading the dominion
leave their own to deſolatio
ſtudying the German tongue, t
to write in Latin; thus, whil
vated an obſolete language, an
boured to apply it to modern ma
neglected their own.

AT the ſame time alſo they bega
wrong end, I mean by being com
tors, and though they have given
inſtances of their induſtry, they have f

al

afforded any of genius. If criticiſm could have improved the taſte of a people, the Germans would have been the moſt polite nation alive. We ſhall no where behold the learned wear a more important appearance than here; no where more dignified with profeſſorſhips, or dreſſed out in the fopperies of ſcholaſtic finery. However, they ſeem to earn all the honours of this kind which they enjoy. Their aſſiduity is unparalleled; and did they employ half thoſe hours on ſtudy, which they beſtow on reading, we might be induced to pity, as well as praiſe, their painful preheminence. But guilty of a fault, too common to great readers, they write through volumes, while they do not think through a page. Never fatigued themſelves, they think the reader can never be weary; ſo they drone on, ſaying all that can be ſaid

on

on the ſubject, not ſelec
advanced to the purpoſ
write books, they nev
lios.

But let the Germa
they are dull, no na
more laudable ſolemn
ſtands all the decorun
the diſcourſe of a pro
heavily, it cannot be
pupils, who frequen
thetic nods of approb
times attended their
On this occaſion, the
their gravity, and ſeem
diſputes are managed b
of Carteſius, whoſe ex
continue to call the ne
thoſe of Ariſtotle. *Tho*

are in the wrong, they argue with an obſtinacy worthy the cauſe of truth; Nego, Probo, and Diſtinguo, grow loud; the diſputants become warm, the moderator cannot be heard, the audience take part in the debate, till at laſt the whole hall buzzes with ſophiſtry and error.

THERE are, it is true, ſeveral ſocieties in this country, which are chiefly calculated to promote knowlege. His late majeſty as elector of Hanover has eſtabliſhed one at Gottingen, at an expence of not leſs than an hundred thouſand pound. This univerſity has already pickled monſters, and diſſected live puppies without number. Their tranſactions have been publiſhed in the learned world at proper intervals, ſince their inſtitution; and will, it is hoped, one day give them juſt reputation. But had

the

ſign. Experimental philoſophy, mathema-tics, metaphyſics, and polite literature, are here carried on together. The members are not collected from among the ſtudents of ſome obſcure ſeminary, or the wits of a metropolis, but choſen from all the literati of Europe, ſupported by the bounty, and ornamented by the productions of their royal founder. We can eaſily diſcern, how much ſuch an inſtitution excells any other now ſubſiſting. One fundamental error among ſocieties of this kind, is their addicting themſelves to one branch of ſcience, or ſome particular part of polite learning. Thus, in Germany, there are no where ſo many eſtabliſhments of this nature; but as they generally profeſs the promotion of natural or medical knowlege, he who reads their Acta, will only find an obſcure farrago of experiments, moſt frequently terminated

proper eminence; from which to view their ſubject; and their ſtrength will be exhauſted in attaining the ſtation from whence they ſhould have ſet out. With regard to the Royal Society of London, the greateſt, and, perhaps, the oldeſt inſtitution of the kind, had it widened the baſis of its inſtitution, though they might not have propagated more diſcoveries, they would probable have delivered them in a more pleaſing and compendious form. They would have been free from the contempt of the ill-natured, and the raillery of the wit, for which, even candour muſt allow, there is but too much foundation. But the Berlin academy is ſubject to none of all the inconveniencies, but every one of its individuals is in a capacity of deriving more from the common ſtock than he contributes to it, while each academician ſerves as a check upon the reſt of his fellows.

YET,

Yet, very probably, even this
tution will ſoon decay. As
it will decline, with its great
The ſociety, if I may ſo ſpe
ficially ſupported; the introdu
reigners of learning was rig
adopting a foreign language a
the French, in which all the
are to be publiſhed, and q
bated; in this there was an e
have already hinted, the lang
natives of every country, ſhc
the language of its polite le
figure in polite learning, ev
ſhould make their own lan
their own manners; nor wi
ſucceed by introducing that
which has been formed fr
which are different. Beſides,
compoſed of foreigners, muſ

cruited from abroad, unleſs all the natives of the country, to which it belongs, are in a capacity of becoming candidates for its honours, or rewards. While France therefore continues to ſupply Berlin, polite learning will flouriſh; but when royal favour is withdrawn, learning will return to its natural country.

CHAP.

OF POLITE LEA

CHAP.

Of polite learning in Holl
countries of E

HOLLAND, at fi
to have ſome pre
learning. It may be
great emporium, not
than of every other co
though deſtitute of what
ly called a language of
languages are underſtoo
ſpoken. All uſeful inv
and new diſcoveries in
liſhed here almoſt as ſoon
which firſt produced th
duals have the ſame fault
the Germans, of making
memory, than their j

chief employment of their literati is to criticiſe, or anſwer the new performances which appear elſewhere.

A DEARTH of wit in France or England, naturally produces a ſcarcity in Holland. What Ovid ſays of Eccho, may be applied here, *Nec loqui prius ipſa didicit nec reticere loquenti.* They wait till ſomething new comes out from others; examine its merits, and reject it, or make it reverberate through the reſt of Europe.

AFTER all, I know not whether they ſhould be allowed any national character for polite learning. All their taſte is derived to them from neighbouring nations, and that in a language not their own. They ſomewhat reſemble their brokers, who

who trade for immenſe
having any capital.

THE other countries of
be conſidered as immerſed
or making but feeble ef
Spain has long fallen from
rope with her wit, to amuſ
the greatneſs of her cath
Rome conſiders her as the
of all her children, and
ſtill reigns there in triumph
all attempts of the marqui
who ſaw with regret the
his country-men, and brave
oppoſe it, by introducing
of learning, and ſuppreſſing
of monaſtic ignorance, in
genuity of Padré Feijo,

vulgar errors ſo finely expoſes the monkiſh ſtupidity of the times, the religious have prevailed. Enſanada has been baniſhed, and now lives in exile; Feijo has incurred the hatred and contempt of every bigot, whoſe errors he has attempted to oppoſe, and feels, no doubt, the unremitting diſpleaſure of the prieſthood. Peerſecution is a tribute, the Great muſt ever pay for preheminence.

It is a little extraordinary, however, how Spain, whoſe genius is naturally fine, ſhould be ſo much behind the reſt of Europe, in this particular; or why ſchool-divinity ſhould hold its ground there, for near ſix hundred years. The reaſon muſt be, that philoſophical opinions, which are otherwiſe tranſient, acquire ſtability in

in proportion, as they are cc
the laws of the country, anc
and law have no where bee
united as here.

SWEDEN has of late made ſom
in polite learning, in its own
Count Teſſin's inſtructions to t
his pupil, are no bad beginning
muſes can fix their reſidence ſo fa
ward, perhaps, no country bids ſ
their reception. They have, I am
language rude, but energetic; if ſ
bear a poliſh; they have alſo a
ſenſe of liberty, and that ſtrength o
ing, peculiar to northern climate
out its attendant ferocity. They
tainly, in time, produce ſomewhat
if their inteſtine diviſions do not un
ly prevent them.

THE hiſtory of polite learning in Denmark, may be compriſed in the life of one ſingle man; it roſe and fell with the late famous baron Holberg. This was, perhaps, one of the moſt extraordinary perſonages that has done honour to the preſent century. His being the ſon of a private centinel, did not abate the ardour of his ambition; for he learned to read, though without a maſter. Upon the death of his father, being left intirely deſtitute, he was involved in all that diſtreſs, which is common among the poor, and of which the Great have ſcarce any idea. However, though only a boy of nine years old, he ſtill perſiſted in purſuing his ſtudies, travelled about from ſchool to ſchool, and begg'd his learning and his

bread. When at the age of
inſtead of applying himſelf to
lower occupations, which
adapted to ſuch circumſtanc
reſolved to travel for improv
Norway the place of his birtl
hagen the capital city of De
lived there by teaching Fre
ſame time avoiding no opp
improvement, that his ſcanty
permit. But his ambition w
reſtrained, or his thirſt of k
tisfied, until he had ſeen
Without money, recommer
friends, he undertook to ſet
his travels, and make the tour
on foot. A good voice, and
ſkill in muſic, were the only
had to ſupport an undertaking
five; ſo he travelled by day, a

ſung at the doors of peaſants houſes, to get himſelf a lodging. In this manner, while yet very young, Holberg paſſed through France, Germany, and Holland, and coming over to England, took up his reſidence for two years in the univerſity of Oxford. Here, he ſubſiſted by teaching French and muſic, and wrote his univerſal hiſtory, his earlieſt, but worſt performance. Furniſhed with all the learning of Europe, he at laſt thought proper to return to Copenhagen, where his ingenious productions quickly gained him that favour he deſerved. He compoſed not leſs than eighteen comedies; thoſe in his own language are ſaid to excel, and thoſe which are tranſlated into French have peculiar merit. He was honoured with nobility, and enriched by the bounty of the king; ſo that a life begun in contempt

tempt and penury, ended in o
eſteem.

THUS we ſee, in what a lo
lite learning is in the coun
mentioned, either paſt its p
yet arrived at maturity. A
the ſketch I have drawn be
it was, for the moſt part, tak
ſpot. I am ſenſible, however
propriety of national reflexio
not truth biaſs me more than
in this particular, I ſhould, int
account already given, have
the reader with a panegyric on
the individuals of every coun
merits deſerve the warmeſt
praiſe, Apoſtol Zeno, Algar
doni, Muratori, and Stay, in Italy
Klopſtock, and Rabner, in

Muſchenbrook, and Gaubius, in Holland; all deſerve the higheſt applauſe. Men like theſe, while the great, and the avaricious of this world, are contriving means to aggravate national hatred; and, perhaps, fonder of ſatisfying vanity than juſtice, are willing to make the world uneaſy, becauſe themſelves are ſo; continue ever the friends of man. Men like theſe, united by one bond, purſuing one deſign, ſpend their labour, and their lives, in making their fellow-creatures happy, and in repairing the breaches cauſed by ambition. In this light, the meaneſt philoſopher, though all his poſſeſſions are his lamp or his cell, is more truly valuable than he, whoſe name ecchoes to the ſhout of the million, and who ſtands in all the glare of admiration. In this light, though poverty and contemptuous neglect are

all

all the wages of his good will fi
kind, yet the rectitude of his
is an ample recompence; and sel
for the preſent, and the alluring
of fame for futurity, reward hi
The perſpective of life bright
us, when terminated by an
charming. Every intermediate
want, baniſhment, or ſorrow, re
luſtre from its diſtant influence.
this in view, the patriot, philoſoph
poet, have often looked with ca
on diſgrace and famine, and reſte
their ſtraw with chearful ſerenity.
the laſt terrors of departing nature
of their ſeverity, and look kindly on
who conſiders his ſufferings as a pa
to immortality, and lays his ſorrows on
bed of fame.

CH

CHAP. VII.

Of polite learning in France.

WE have hitherto ſeen, that wherever the poet was permitted to begin by improving his native language, polite learning flouriſhed; but where the critic undertook the ſame taſk, it has never riſen to any degree of perfection. Let us now examine the merits of modern learning in France and England; where, though it may be on the decline, yet it is ſtill capable of retrieving much of its former ſplendor. In other places, learning has not yet been planted, or has ſuffered a total decay. To attempt amendment there, would be only like the application of remedies to an inſenſible or a mortified part;

part; but here there is ſtil
hope. And indeed the F
are ſo far from giving int
ce of this kind, that, c
they admire the progreſ
making in every ſcience
which we are apt to de
is probably the principa
happineſs. An agreeable
pleaſures, a freedom fro
future ones, and a poign
preſent enjoyment, if th
ſophy, are at leaſt exc
By this they are taught
riod in which they live
The preſent manners,
converſation, ſurpaſs all
A ſimilar enthuſiaſm as
their learning, and their t

with a deſpondence characteriſtic of our nation, are for removing back Britiſh excellence to the reign of Queen Elizabeth, our more happy rivals of the continent cry up the writers of the preſent times with rapture, and regard the age of Lewis XV. as the true Auguſtan age of France.

THE truth is, their preſent writers have not fallen ſo far ſhort of the merits of their anceſtors, as ours have done. That ſelf-ſufficiency, now mentioned, may have been of ſervice to them in this particular. By fancying themſelves ſuperior to their anceſtors, they have been encouraged to enter the liſts with confidence; and by not being dazzled at the ſplendor of another's reputation, have ſometimes had ſagacity

by which he roſe. With the Engliſh, it is different; our writers of riſing merit are generally neglected; while the few of an eſtabliſhed reputation are over paid by luxurious affluence. The young encounter every hardſhip which generally attends upon aſpiring indigence; the old, enjoy the vulgar, and, perhaps, the more prudent ſatisfaction of putting riches in competition with fame. Thoſe are often ſeen to ſpend their youth in want and obſcurity; theſe are ſometimes found to lead an old age of indolence and avarice. But ſuch treatment muſt naturally be expected from Engliſhmen, whoſe national character it is, to be ſlow and cautious in making friends, but violent in friendſhips once contracted. The Engliſh nobility, in ſhort, are often known to give greater rewards to genius than

the French, who, howeve
more judicious in the appli
empty favours.

THE fair ſex in France
a little contributed to preve
of taſte and literature, by e
qualifications in their admir
of faſhion at Paris, however
we may think him here, muſ
ed with the reigning modes
as well as of dreſs, to be abl
his miſtreſs agreeably. T
pedants are not to be caug
ſhew, by the ſqueeze of a
ogling of a broad eye: but
ſued at once through all t
of the Newtonian ſyſtem, o
phyſics of Locke. I have ſ
a circle of beauty at the chyn

of Rouelle, as gracing the court at Verſailles. And indeed wiſdom never appears ſo charming, as when graced and protected by beauty.

To theſe advantages may be added the reception of their language in the different courts of Europe. An author, who excels, is ſure of having all the polite for admirers, and is encouraged to write by the pleaſing expectation of univerſal fame. Add to this, that thoſe countries who can make nothing good from their own language, have lately begun to write in this, ſome of whoſe productions contribute to ſupport the preſent literary reputation of France.

THERE are therefore many among the French, who do honour to the preſent age,

age, and whoſe writings w
to poſterity with an ampl
ſome of the moſt cel
follow;

VOLTAIRE, whoſe vol
rited productions, are t
require an elogy; does
the champion mentione
of great reputation in
exerciſes united, but infer
pion ſingly, who excels o

MONTESQUIEU, a nan
ing fame with the for
of Laws is an inſtance, h
is able to lead learning.
been adopted by the lite
it not poſſible for opinion
ſible to be formed upon

ples, if a genius like his, could be found to attempt ſuch an undertaking? He ſeems more a poet than a philoſopher.

ROUSSEAU of Geneva. A profeſſed man-hater, or, more properly ſpeaking, a philoſopher enraged with one half of mankind, becauſe they unavoidably make the other half unhappy. Such ſentiments are generally the reſult of much good nature, and little experience.

PYRON, an author poſſeſſed of as much wit as any man alive, yet with as little prudence, to turn to his own advantage. A comedy of his, called La Metromanie, is the beſt theatrical production, that has appeared of late in Europe. But I know not, whether I ſhould moſt commend his genius, or cenſure his obſcenity;

obſcenity; his ode à Priape, has j
cluded him from a place in the
of Belles Lettrês. However, th
natured Monteſquieu, by his inte
cured the ſtarving bard a triflin
His own epitaph was all the
took upon the academy for bein

Cy Git Pyron qui ne fut jamais
Pas même Academicien.

Crebillon, junior. A writ
merit, but guilty of the fame
faults with the former. Wit
in dreſſing up obſcenity, is li
uſed in painting a corpſe; it ma
rendered tolerable to one ſenſe,
not quickly to offend ſome other.

GRESSET, agreeable and eaſy. His comedy called the Mechant, and an humourous poem, entitled Ver-vert, have original merit. He was bred a jeſuit, but his wit procured his diſmiſſion from the ſociety. This laſt work particularly, could expect no pardon from the Convent, being a ſatyr againſt nunneries!

DALEMBERT, has united an extenſive ſkill in ſcientifical learning, with the moſt refined taſte for the polite arts. His excellence in both, have procured him a ſeat in each academy.

DIDEROT, an elegant writer and ſubtil reaſoner. He is the ſuppoſed author of the famous Theſis, which the abbé Prade ſuſtained before the doctors of the Sorbonne.

bonne. It was levelled againſt C
nity, and the Sorbonne too haſtil
it their ſanction. They perceived i
port, however, when it was too lat
college was brought into ſome co
and the abbé obliged to take refug
court of Berlin.

The marquis D'Argens attempts
the character of a philoſopher to th
of a debauchée.

The catalogue might be encreaſe
ſeveral other authors of merit, ſu
Marivaux, Le Franc, Saint Foix,
touches, and Modonville; but let it
to ſay, that by theſe, the character
preſent age is tolerably ſupported.
their poets ſeldom riſe to fine enthuſ
they never ſink into abſurdity; tho

they fail to aſtoniſh, they are generally poſſeſſed of talents to pleaſe.

The age of Lewis XIV. notwithſtanding theſe reſpectable names, is ſtill vaſtly ſuperior. For beſide the general tendency of critical corruption, which ſhall be ſpoken of by and by, there are other ſymptoms which indicate a decline. There is, for inſtance, a fondneſs for ſcepticiſm, which runs through the works of ſome of their moſt applauded writers, and which the numerous claſs of their imitators have contributed to diffuſe. Nothing can be a more certain ſign, that genius is in the wane, than its being obliged to fly to paradox for ſupport, and attempting to be erroneouſly agreeable. A man, who with all the impotence of wit, and all the eager deſires of infidelity, writes

againſt the religion of his country, n
raiſe doubts, but will never give con
tion; all he can do is to render ſoc
leſs happy than he found it. It was a
manner, which the father of the late
Saint Foix, took to reclaim his ſon fr
juvenile error. The young poet h
himſelf up for ſome time in his ſt
his father, willing to know what
gaged his attention ſo cloſely, upon
found him buſied in drawing
ſyſtem of religion, and endeav
ſhew the abſurdity of that alre
bliſhed. The old man knew
rience, that it was uſeleſs to
to convince a vain young man by
ſon; ſo only deſired his company
When come into the father's apa
he takes his ſon by the hand, and

ing back a curtain at one end of the room, diſcovered a crucifix exquiſitely painted. 'My ſon, ſays he, you deſire to 'change the religion of your country, be-'hold the fate of a reformer.' The truth is, vanity is more apt to miſguide men than falſe reaſoning; as ſome had rather be conſpicuous in a mob, than unnoticed even in privy council, ſo others chuſe rather to be foremoſt in the retinue of error, than follow in the train of truth. What influence the conduct of ſuch writers may have on the morals of a people, is not my buſineſs here to determine. Certain I am, that it has a manifeſt tendency to ſubvert the literary merits of the country in view. The change of religion in every nation, has hitherto produced barbariſm and ignorance, and ſuch will be probably

bly its conſequences in every
riod. For when the laws, and
nions of ſociety, are made to cl
mony is diſſolved, and all the arts
unavoidably cruſhed in the encoun

THE writers of this country h
late alſo fallen into a method of co
ing every part of art and ſcience, a
ſing from ſimple principles. The f
of Monteſquieu, and one or two
has induced all the ſubordinate rank
genius into vicious imitation. To
end they turn to our view that ſide of
ſubject, which contributes to ſupport th
hypotheſis, while the objections are genera
paſſed over in ſilence. Thus an univer
ſyſtem riſes from a partial repreſentati
of the queſtion, an Whole is conclud
from a Part, a book appears entirely

and the fancy-built fabric is ſtiled for a ſhort time very ingenious. In this manner we have ſeen of late, almoſt every ſubject in morals, natural hiſtory, politics, œconomy, and commerce treated; ſubjects naturally proceeding on many principles; and ſome even oppoſite to each other, are all taught to proceed along the line of ſyſtematic ſimplicity, and continue, like other agreeable falſhoods, extremely pleaſing, till they are detected.

I MUST ſtill add another fault of a nature ſomewhat ſimilar to the former. As thoſe above mentioned are for contracting a ſingle ſcience into ſyſtem, ſo thoſe I am going to ſpeak of are for drawing up a ſyſtem of all the ſciences united. Such undertakings as theſe are carried on by different writers cemented into one body, and

who, not daunted at the immenſe diſtance between one great paſteboard and the other, opens the volume and explores his way through a region ſo extenſive, but barren of entertainment. No unexpected landſchape there to delight the imagination; no diverſity of proſpect to cheat the painful journey; he ſees the wide extended deſart lie before him; what is paſt only encreaſes his terror of what is to come. His courſe is not half finiſhed, he looks behind him with affright, and forward with deſpair. Perſeverance is at laſt overcome, and a night of oblivion lends its friendly aid to terminate the perplexity.

CHAP-

CHAP. IX.

Of learning in Great Britain.

TO acquire a character for lear among the Engliſh at preſent, is neceſſary to know much more tha either important or uſeful. It ſeems ſpirit of the times for men here to exha their natural ſagacity in exploring the tricacies of another man's thought, and th never to have leiſure to think for the ſelves; others have carried on learni from that ſtage, where the good ſe of our anceſtors have thought it too n nute or too ſpeculative to inſtruct or amu By the induſtry of ſuch, the ſciences, whi in themſelves are eaſy of acceſs, affright t

learner with the ſeverity of their appearance. He ſees them ſurrounded with ſpeculation and ſubtilty, placed there by their profeſſors as if with a view of deterring his approach. From hence it happens, that the generality of readers fly from the ſcholar to the compiler, who offers them a more ſafe and ſpeedy conveyance.

From this fault alſo ariſes that mutual contempt between the ſcholar and the man of the world, of which every day's experience furniſheth inſtances.

The man of taſte, however, ſtands neuter in this controverſy; he ſeems placed in a middle ſtation, between the world and the cell, between learning and common ſenſe. He teaches the vulgar on what part of a character to lay the emphaſis of praiſe, and the

the ſcholar where to point
ſo as to deſerve it. By his n
philoſopher acquires popula
all that are truly great the
poſterity. By means of pol
lone, the patriot and the hero
praiſeth virtue, and he wh
who fights ſucceſsfully for h
who dies in its defence, beco
But this taſte now ſeems culti
ardour than formerly, and co
public muſt one day expect to
tages ariſing from it, and the
ſures it affords our leiſure entir
For if, as it ſhould ſeem, theRe
are improperly directed; if th
pable of ſupporting the hono
by their writings, prefer opul
if the Stage ſhould be ſhut
merit, and open only to intere

If ſuch ſhould happen to be the vile complexion of the times, (and that it is nearly ſo we ſhall ſhortly ſee) the very virtue of the age will be forgotten by poſterity; and nothing remembered, except our filling a chaſm in the regiſters of time, or having ſerved to continue the ſpecies.

CHAP.

CHAP. X.

Of rewarding Genius in E

THERE is nothing auth
apt to lament, than war
ragement from the age. Wh
differences in other reſpects, t
ready to unite in this complair
indirectly offers himſelf as an
the truth of his aſſertion.

THE beneficed divine, whoſe
only imaginary, expoſtulates as
the pooreſt author. Should intere
fortune, advance the divine to a
or the poor ſon of Parnaſſus into
which the other has reſign'd; bo
thors no longer, the one goes t

once a day, kneels upon cuſhions of velvet, and thanks gracious heaven for having made the circumſtances of all mankind ſo extremely happy; the other battens on all the delicacies of life, enjoys his wife and his eaſy chair, and ſometimes, for the ſake of converſation, deplores the luxury of theſe degenerate days.

All encouragements to merit are therefore miſapplied, which make the author too rich to continue his profeſſion. There can be nothing more juſt than the old obſervation, that authors, like running horſes, ſhould be fed but not fattened. If we would continue them in our ſervice, we ſhould reward them with a little money and a great deal of praiſe, ſtill keeping their avarice ſubſervient to their ambition. Not that I think a writer incapable of filling an employment with dignity.

than reward the ingenious. A lad whoſe paſſions are not ſtrong enough in youth to miſlead him from that path of ſcience, which his tutors, and not his inclinations, have chalked out, by four or five years perſeverance, may probably obtain every advantage and honour his college can beſtow. I forget whether the ſimile has been uſed before, but I would compare the man, whoſe youth has been thus paſt in the tranquillity of diſpaſſionate prudence, to liquors which never ferment, and conſequently, continue always muddy. Paſſions may raiſe a commotion in the youthful breaſt, but they diſturb only to refine it. However this be, mean talents are often rewarded in colleges, with an eaſy ſubſiſtance. The candidates for preferments of this kind, often regard their admiſſion as a patent for future indolence; ſo that

they were better provided for; until they become rich, we can have no expectation of Engliſh ſtudents at Leyden.

PREMIUMS alſo, propoſed for literary excellence, when given as encouragements to boys, may be uſeful; but when deſigned as rewards to men, are certainly miſapplied. We have ſeldom ſeen a performance of any great merit, in conſequence of rewards propoſed in this manner. Who has ever obſerved a writer of any eminence, a candidate in ſo precarious a conteſt? The man who knows the real value of his own genius, will no more venture it upon an uncertainty, than he who knows the true uſe of a guinea, will ſtake it with a ſharper.

EVERY

OF POLITE LEA

EVERY encouragement gi
when known to be ſuch, is
inſult upon genius. This
thing more evident, than th
ed ſucceſs of thoſe who ſollic
When firſt brought into fa
tions were conferred upon
alone, or thoſe who were rep
at preſent, we ſee them ma
indigence, and requeſted no
merit, but as a relief of diſt
men happen to want ſkill
their own buſineſs, yet they a
a book; if mechanics want
dies ſhame, they write books
ſcriptions. Scarce a morni
propoſals of this nature are
the half-opening doors of
perhaps, a paltry petition,

thor's wants, but not his merits. I would not willingly prevent that pity which is due to indigence, but while the ſtreams of liberality are thus diffuſed, they muſt in the end become proportionably ſhallow.

WHAT then are the proper encouragements of genius? I anſwer, ſubſiſtance and reſpect, for theſe are rewards congenial to its nature. Every animal has an aliment peculiarly ſuited to its conſtitution. The heavy ox ſeeks nouriſhment from earth; the light cameleon has been ſuppoſed to exiſt on air; a ſparer diet even than this, will ſatisfy the man of true genius, for he makes a luxurious banquet upon empty applauſe. It is this alone, which has inſpired all that ever was truly great and noble among us. It is, as Cicero finely calls it the eccho of virtue. Avârice is the paſſion

paſſion of inferior natures;
of the common herd. T
draws his quill merely to
more deſerves ſucceſs than
a piſtol.

When the link betwe
learning was entire, than
fame were in a capacity of a
the great Somers was at
nage was faſhionable am
The middle ranks of man
rally imitate the Great, th
example; and applauded
not from feeling. I have
of that glorious age ſay, t
his lordſhip, has procured h
the whole week following
in his patron's chariot, h
with a citizen's coach on e

ſion. For who would not be proud to entertain a man who kept ſo much good company?

But this link now ſeems entirely broken. Since the days of a certain prime miniſter of inglorious memory, the learned have been kept pretty much at a diſtance. A jockey, or a laced player, ſupplies the place of the ſcholar, poet, or the man of virtue. Thoſe converſations, once the reſult of wiſdom, wit, and innocence, are now turned to humbler topics, little more being expected from a companion than a laced coat, a pliant bow, and an immoderate friendſhip for—— a well ſerved table.

Wit, when neglected by the great, is generally deſpiſed by the vulgar. Thoſe who are unacquainted with the world, are

apt to fancy the man of wit, i
very agreeable life. They con
haps, that he is attended to wi
miration, and dictates to the r
kind, with all the eloquence
superiority. Very different is h
tuation. He is called an au
know that an author is a thin
laughed at. His person, nc
comes the mirth of the com
approach, the most fat un
brightens into malicious mé
dermen laugh, and revenge
dicule which was lavished
fathers.

Etiam victis redit in pra
Victoresque cadunt.

IT is indeed a reflection ſomewhat mortifying to the author, who breaks his ranks, and ſingles out for public favour, to think that he muſt combat contempt, before he can arrive at glory. That he muſt expect to have all the fools of ſociety united againſt him, before he can hope for the applauſe of the judicious. For this, however, he muſt prepare beforehand; as thoſe who have no idea of the difficulty of his employment, will be apt to regard his inactivity as idleneſs, and not having a notion of the pangs of uncomplying thought in themſelves, it is not to be expected they ſhould have any deſire of rewarding it in others.

VOLTAIRE has finely deſcribed the hardſhips a man muſt encounter, who writes for

the public. I need make
the length of the quotatio

'YOUR fate, my dear
'ſtrongly marked to perm
'The bee muſt toil in ma
'ſilk-worm muſt ſpin,
'muſt diſſect them, and
'ſing of their labours. Y
'poet, and a ſcholar, even th
'clinations ſhould reſiſt; natu
'for inclination. But hope no
'to find tranquillity in the emp
'are going to purſue. The ro
'is not leſs obſtructed with diſ
'than that of ambition.

'IF you have the misfortu
'cel in your profeſſion as a
'tance muſt tincture all your

'ments. If you ſucceed, you make ene-
'mies. You tread a narrow path, contempt
'on one ſide, and hatred on the other, are
'ready to ſeize you upon the ſlighteſt de-
'viation.

'But, why muſt I be hated, you will,
'perhaps, reply, why muſt I be perſecut-
'ed for having wrote a pleaſing poem, for
'having produced an applauded tragedy,
'or for otherwiſe inſtructing, or amuſing
'mankind, or myſelf.

'My dear friend, theſe very ſucceſſes
'ſhall render you miſerable for life. Let
'me ſuppoſe your performance has merit,
'let me ſuppoſe you have ſurmounted the
'teizing employments of printing and pub-
'liſhing, how will you be able to lull the
'critics, who, like Cerberus, are poſted at
"all

'all the avenues of litera
'ſettle the merits of ever
'mance. How, I ſay, will
'make them open in your fa
'always three or four liter
'France, as many in Holl
'porting oppoſite intereſts
'ſellers, who guide theſe pe
'lations, find their account i
'the authors employed by
'wretchedneſs to add to thei
'lignity. The majority may b
'vour, but you may depend o
'by the reſt. Loaded with un
'rility, perhaps you reply;
'both plead at the bar of the
'both are condemned to ridic

'But if you write for th
'caſe is ſtill more worthy

'You are there to be judged by men, 'whom the cuſtom of the times has ren- 'dered contemptible. Irritated by their 'own inferiority, they exert all their little 'tyranny upon you, revenging upon the 'author, the inſults they receive from the 'public. From ſuch men then you are 'to expect your ſentence. Suppoſe your 'piece admitted, acted: one ſingle ill-na- 'tured jeſt from the pit, is ſufficient to 'cancel all your labours. But allowing 'that it ſucceeds. There are an hundred 'ſquibs flying all abroad to prove, that it 'ſhould not have ſucceeded. You ſhall 'find your brighteſt ſcenes burleſqued by 'the ignorant; and the learned, who know 'a little Greek, and nothing of their na- 'tive language, affect to deſpiſe you.

'But,

'But, perhaps, with a
'you carry your piece bef
'quality. She gives the
'brain to her maid, to b
'for curling her hair; whi
'man, who carries the gau
'ury, insults your appea
'the livery of indigence.

'But granting your e
'laſt forced envy to confeſs,
'have ſome merit; this th
'ward you can expect whil
'ever, for this tribute of app
'expect perſecution. You w
'the author of ſcandal whi
'never ſeen, of verſes you d
'ſentiments directly contrary
'In ſhort, you muſt embark
'party, or all parties will be

'THERE are among us, a number of 'learned ſocieties, where a lady preſides, 'whoſe wit begins to twinkle, when the 'ſplendour of her beauty begins to decline. 'One or two men of learning compoſe 'her miniſters of ſtate. Theſe muſt be 'flattered, or made enemies by being ne-'glected. Thus, though you had the 'merit of all antiquity united in your per-'ſon, you grow old in miſery and diſgrace. 'Every place deſigned for men of letters, 'is filled up by men of intrigue. Some 'nobleman's private tutor, ſome court flat-'terer, ſhall bear away the prize, and 'leave you to anguiſh and to diſappoint-'ment.'

YET it were well, if none but the dunces of ſociety, were combined to render the profeſſion

profeſſion of an author ridiculo
happy. Men of the firſt eminence
found to indulge this illiberal vei
ry. Two contending writers oft
oppoſition of their wit, render th
ſion contemptible in the eyes of
who ſhould have been taught
And yet, whatever the reader ma
himſelf, it is at leaſt two to one,
a greater blockhead than the moſt
dunce he affects to deſpiſe.

THE poet's poverty is a ſtandin
contempt. His writing for bread
pardonable offence. Perhaps, of
kind, an author, in theſe times, is
hardly. We keep him poor, ar
vile his poverty. Like angry pa
correct their children till they cry
correct them for crying, we rep

for living by his wit, and yet allow him no other means to live.

His taking refuge in garrets and cellars, has, of late, been violently objected to him, and that by men, who I dare hope, are more apt to pity than inſult his diſtreſs. Is poverty the writer's fault? No doubt, he knows how to prefer a bottle of champaign, to the nectar of the neighbouring alehouſe, or a veniſon paſty to a plate of potatoes. Want of delicacy is not in him, but in us, who deny him the opportunity of making an elegant choice.

Wit certainly is the property of thoſe who have it, nor ſhould we be diſpleaſed if it is the only property a man ſometimes has. We muſt not under-rate him who uſes it for ſubſiſtence, and flies from the ingratitude

titude of the age, even to ab
redress. If the profession of an
be laughed at by stupids, it
to be contemptibly rich, tha
bly poor. For all the wit that
the human mind, will at pre
shield the author's poverty
than his high-topped gloves
unavoidable omissions of his

To be more serious, new
lices, and vices, make new m
sary in every age. An author
sidered as a merciful substitute
lature; he acts not by punish
but preventing them; however vi
present age, there may be still grow
ployment for ridicule, or reproof, fo
suasion, or satire. If the author be, th
fore, still so necessary among us, let us t

him with proper conſideration, as a child of the public, not a rent-charge on the community. And, indeed, a *child* of the public he is in all reſpects; for while ſo well able to direct others, how incapable is he frequently found of guiding himſelf! His ſimplicity expoſes him to all the inſidious approaches of cunning, his ſenſibility to the ſlighteſt invaſions of contempt. Though poſſeſſed of fortitude to ſtand unmoved the expected burſts of an earthquake, yet of feelings ſo exquiſitely poignant, as to agonize under the ſlighteſt diſappointment. Broken reſt, taſteleſs meals, and cauſeleſs anxiety, ſhorten his life, or render it unfit for active employment; prolonged vigils, and intenſe application ſtill farther contract his ſpan, and make his time glide inſenſibly away. Let us not then aggravate thoſe natural inconveniencies by neglect; we have had

had ſufficient inſtances of th
Sale and More will ſuffic
leaſt. But they are dead, a
are over. The neglected au
ſian eclogues, which, how
excel any in our languag
Happy, if *inſenſible* of our
ing at our ingratitude. It is
age has already produced
preſſing foremoſt in the li
worthy of better times, ſch
nued adverſity into an hatre
flying from thought to drun
ing to the united preſſure o
ry, and ſorrow, ſinking unh
one friend to drop a tear on th
ed obſequies, and indebted to
grave.

The author, when unpatronized by the Great, has naturally recourſe to the bookſeller. There cannot be, perhaps, imagined a combination more prejudicial to taſte than this. It is the intereſt of the one to allow as little for writing, and of the other to write as much as poſſible; accordingly, tedious compilations, and periodical magazines, are the reſult of their joint endeavours. In theſe circumſtances, the author bids adieu to fame, writes for bread, and for that only imagination is ſeldom called in; he ſits down to addreſs the venal muſe with the moſt phlegmatic apathy; and, as we are told of the Ruſſian, courts his miſtreſs by falling aſleep in her lap. His reputation never ſpreads in a wider circle than that of the trade, who generally value him, not for the

CHAP. XI.

Of the Marks of Literary Decay in France *and* England.

THE faults already mentioned are ſuch, as learning is often found to flouriſh under; but there is one of a much more dangerous nature, which has begun to fix itſelf among us, I mean criticiſm, which may properly be called the natural deſtroyer of polite learning. We have ſeen that Critics, or thoſe whoſe only buſineſs is to write books upon other books, are always more numerous as learning is more diffuſed; and experience has ſhewn, that, inſtead of promoting its intereſt, which they profeſs to do, they generally injure it. This decay, which criti-

ciſm

ciſm produces, may be deplored, but can ſcarcely be remedied, as the man who writes againſt the critics, is obliged to add himſelf to the number. Other depravations in the republic of letters, ſuch as affectation in ſome popular writer, leading others into vicious imitation; political ſtruggles in the ſtate; a depravity of morals among the people; ill-directed encouragement, or no encouragement from the Great, theſe have been often found to co-operate in the decline of literature; and it has ſometimes declined, as in modern Italy, without them; but an increaſe of criticiſm has always portended a decay. Of all misfortunes, therefore, in the commonwealth of letters, this is the moſt ſevere. At ſuch a tribunal, no work of original merit can pleaſe. Sublimity, if carried to an exalted height, approaches

proaches burleſque, and humour ſinks into vulgarity; the perſon who cannot feel, may ridicule both as ſuch, and bring rules to corroborate his aſſertion. There is, in ſhort, no excellence in writing, that ſuch judges may not place among the neighbouring defects. Rules render the reader more difficult to be pleaſed, and abridge the author's power of pleaſing.

If we turn to either country, we ſhall perceive evident ſymptoms of this natural decay beginning to appear. Upon a moderate calculation, there ſeems to be as many volumes of criticiſm publiſhed in thoſe countries, as of all other kinds of polite erudition united. Paris ſends forth not leſs than four literary journals every month, the Année-literaire, and the Fuille by Freron, the Journal Etrangere by the Chevalier D'Arc, and

and Le Mercure by Marmontel. We have two literary reviews in London, with critical news-papers and magazines without number. The compilers of these resemble the commoners of Rome; they are all for levelling property, not by encreasing their own, but by diminishing that of others. The man who has any good nature in his disposition must, however, be somewhat displeased to see distinguished reputations often the sport of ignorance. To see by one false pleasantry, the future peace of a worthy man's life disturbed, and this only because he has unsuccessfully attempted to instruct or amuse us. Though ill nature is far from being wit, yet it is generally laughed at as such. The critic enjoys the triumph, and ascribes to his parts, what is only due to his effrontery. I fire with indignation when I see persons wholly destitute

tute of education and genius, indent to the preſs, and thus turn book-makers, adding to the ſin of criticiſm the ſin of ignorance alſo. Whoſe trade is a bad one, and who are bad workmen in the trade.

When I conſider thoſe induſtrious men as indebted to the works of others for a precarious ſubſiſtence, when I ſee them coming down at ſtated intervals to rummage the bookſeller's compter for materials to work upon; it raiſes a ſmile, though mixed with pity. It reminds me of an animal called by naturaliſts the ſoldier. This little creature, ſays the hiſtorian, is paſſionately fond of a ſhell, but not being ſupplied with one by nature, has recourſe to the deſerted ſhell of ſome other. I have ſeen theſe harmleſs reptiles, continues he, come down once a-year from the mountains, rank

rank and file, cover the whole ſhoar and ply buſily about, each in queſt of a ſhell to pleaſe it. Nothing can be more amuſing than their induſtry upon this occaſion. One ſhell is too big, another too little, they enter and keep poſſeſſion ſometimes for a good while until one is, at laſt, found entirely to pleaſe. When all are thus properly equipped, they march up again to the mountains, and live in their new acquiſition, till under a new neceſſity of changing.

THERE is indeed ſcarce an error of which our preſent writers are guilty, that does not ariſe from their oppoſing ſyſtems, there is ſcarce an error that criticiſm cannot be brought to excuſe. From this proceeds the affected ſecurity of our odes, the ſuneleſs flow of our blank verſe, the pom-

pous epithet, laboured diction, and every other deviation from common ſenſe, which procures the poet the applauſe of the month; he is praiſed by all, read by a few, and ſoon forgotten.

THERE never was an unbeaten path trodden by the poet, that the critic did not endeavour to reclaim him, by calling his attempt innovation. This might be inſtanced in Dante, who firſt followed nature, and was perſecuted by the critics as long as he lived. Thus novelty, one of the greateſt beauties in poetry, muſt be avoided, or the connoiſſeur be diſpleaſed. It is one of the chief privileges, however, of genius, to fly from the herd of imitators by ſome happy ſingularity; for ſhould he ſtand ſtill, his heavy purſuers will at length certainly come up, and fairly diſpute the victory.

The ingenious Mr. Hogarth uſed to aſſert, that every one, except the connoiſſeur, was a judge of painting. The ſame may be aſſerted of writing; the public in general ſet the whole piece in the proper point of view; the critic lays his eye cloſe to all its minuteneſs, and condemns or approves in detail. And this may be the reaſon why ſo many writers at preſent, are apt to appeal from the tribunal of criticiſm to that of the people.

From a deſire in the critic of grafting the ſpirit of ancient languages upon the Engliſh, has proceeded of late ſeveral diſagreeable inſtances of pedantry. Among the number, I think we may reckon blank verſe. Nothing but the greateſt ſublimity of ſubject can render ſuch a meaſure pleaſing; however

however, we now ſee it uſed upon the moſt trivial occaſions; it has particularly found way into our didactic poetry, and is likely to bring that ſpecies of compoſition into diſrepute, for which the Engliſh are deſervedly famous.

Those who are acquainted with writing, know that our language runs almoſt naturally into blank verſe. The writers of our novels, romances, and all of this claſs, who have no notion of ſtile, naturally hobble into this unharmonious meaſure. If rhymes, therefore, be more difficult, for that very reaſon, I would have our poets write in rhyme. Such a reſtriction upon the thought of a good poet, often lifts and encreaſes the vehemence of every ſentiment; for fancy, like a fountain, plays higheſt by diminiſhing the aperture. But rhymes, it will be

ſaid,

ſaid, are a remnant of monkiſh ſtupidity, an innovation upon the poetry of the ancients. They are but indifferently acquainted with antiquity, who make the aſſertion. Rhymes are probably of older date than either the Greek or Latin dactyl and ſpondee. The Celtic, which is allowed to be the firſt language ſpoken in Europe, has ever preſerved them, as we may find in the Edda of Iceland, and the Iriſh carrols ſtill ſung among the original inhabitants of that iſland. Olaus Wormius gives us ſome of the Teutonic poetry in this way; and Pantoppidan, biſhop of Bergen, ſome of the Norwegian: in ſhort, this jingle of ſounds is almoſt natural to mankind, at leaſt, it is ſo to our language, if we may judge from many unſucceſsful attempts to throw it off.

I SHOULD

I SHOULD not have employed ſo much time in oppoſing this erroneous innovation, if it were not apt to introduce another in its train: I mean, a diſguſting ſolemnity of manner into our poetry; and as the proſe writer has been ever found to follow the poet, it muſt conſequently baniſh in both, all that agreeable trifling, which, if I may ſo expreſs it, often deceives us into inſtruction. The fineſt ſentiment, and the moſt weighty truth, may put on a pleaſant face, and it is even virtuous to jeſt when ſerious advice muſt be diſguſting. But inſtead of this, the moſt trifling performance among us now aſſumes all the didactic ſtiffneſs of wiſdom. The moſt diminutive ſon of fame, or of famine, has his *we* and his *us*, his *firſtlys* and his *ſecondlys* as methodical, as if bound in cow-hide, and cloſed with claſps of

of braſs. Were theſe Monthly Reviews and Magazines frothy, pert, or abſurd, they might find ſome pardon; but to be dull and droniſh, is an encroachment on the prerogative of a folio. Theſe things ſhould be conſidered as pills to purge melancholly; they ſhould be made up in our ſplenetic climate, to be taken as phyſic, and not ſo as to be uſed when we take it.

However, by the power of one ſingle monoſyllable, our critics have almoſt got the victory over humour amongſt us. Does the poet paint the abſurdities of the vulgar; then he is *low*: does he exaggerate the features of folly, to render it more thoroughly ridiculous, he is then very *low*. In ſhort, they have proſcribed the comic or ſatyrical muſe from every walk but high life, which, though abounding in fools as well as the humbleſt

humbleſt ſtation, is by no means ſo fruitful in abſurdity. Among well-bred fools we may deſpiſe much, but have little to laugh at; nature ſeems to preſent us with an univerſal blank of ſilk, ribbands, ſmiles and whiſpers; abſurdity is the poet's game, and good breeding is the nice concealment of abſurdities. The truth is, the critic generally miſtakes humour for wit, which is a very different excellence. Wit raiſes human nature above its level; humour acts a contrary part, and equally depreſſes it. To expect exalted humour, is a contradiction in terms; and the critic, by demanding an impoſſibility from the comic poet, has, in effect, baniſhed new comedy from the ſtage. But to put the ſame thought in a different light.

When an unexpected ſimilitude in two objects ſtrikes the imagination; in other words, when a thing is *wittily* expreſſed, all our pleaſure turns into admiration of the artiſt, who had fancy enough to draw the picture. When a thing is *humorouſly* deſcribed, our burſt of laughter proceeds from a very different cauſe; we compare the abſurdity of the character repreſented with our own, and triumph in our conſcious ſuperiority. No natural defect can be a cauſe of laughter, becauſe it is a misfortune to which ourſelves are liable; a defect of this kind, changes the paſſion into pity or horror; we only laugh at thoſe inſtances of moral abſurdity, to which we are conſcious we ourſelves are not liable. For inſtance, ſhould I deſcribe a man as wanting his noſe there is no humour in this, as it is an acc de

dent to which human nature is ſubject, and may be any man's caſe: but ſhould I repreſent this man without his noſe, as extremely curious in the choice of his ſnuff-box, we here ſee him guilty of an abſurdity of which we imagine it impoſſible for ourſelves to be guilty, and therefore applaud our own good ſenſe on the compariſon. Thus, then, the pleaſure we receive from wit, turns on the admiration of another; that which we feel from humour, centers in the admiration of ourſelves. The poet, therefore, muſt place the object he would have the ſubject of humour in a ſtate of inferiority; in other words, the ſubject of humour muſt be low.

The ſolemnity worn by many of our modern writers is, I fear, often the maſk of dulneſs; for certain it is, it ſeems to fit every author who pleaſes to put it on. By the

the complexion of many of our late publica-
tions, one might be apt to cry out with
Cicero, *Civem mehercule non puto esse qui his temporibus ridere possit.* On my conscience,
I believe we have all forgot to laugh in
these days. Such writers probably make no
distinction between what is praised, and what
is pleasing; between those commendations
which the reader pays his own discernment,
and those which are the genuine result of
his sensations. It were to be wished therefore
that we no longer found pleasure with the in-
flated stile that has for some years been look-
ed upon as fine writing, and which every
young writer is now obliged to adopt, if he
chuses to be read. We should now dispense
with loaded epithet, and dressing up trifles
with dignity. For to use an obvious instance,
it is not those who make the greatest noise with
their wares in the streets, that have most to
sell

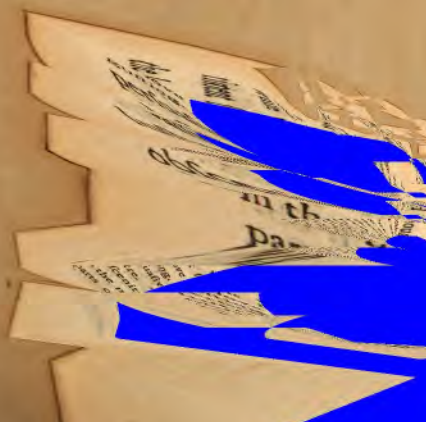
fell. Let us, inſtead of writing finely, try to write naturally. Not hunt after lofty expreſſions to deliver mean ideas; nor be for ever gaping, when we only mean to deliver a whiſper.

CHAP.

PRESENT STATE

le to pleaſe both parties; and
attempting it, finds him-
apable of pleaſing either. If
ſtage pomp, the critic con-
formance to the vulgar; if
n recital, and ſimplicity, it
f inſipidity or dry affecta-

nature therefore of our thea-
enius of our country, it is ex-
ult for a dramatic poet to
lience. But happy would he
the only difficulties he had to
here are many other more
mbinations againſt the little
ge. Our poet's performance
o a proceſs truly chymical
reſented to the public. It
in the manager's fire, ſtrain-
ed



ome mouthing machine, who
irtue out of countenance, by
imitation.

ever be the incentives to vice
nd at the theatre, public plea-
erally leſs guilty than ſolitary
ke our our ſolitary ſatisfactions
nt, the actor is uſeful, as by
ne poet's work makes its way
e to the cloſet, for all muſt al-
reader receives more benefit
a well-written play, than by
ed.

this rule inverted on our thea-
t? Old pieces are revived, and
w ones admitted; the actor is
eye, and the poet ſeldom per-
pear; the public are again ob-
nate thoſe haſhes of abſurdity,
which

ſcenes were forgotten. A man blind of one eye, ſhould always be painted in profile. Let the ſpectator who aſſiſts at any of theſe new revived pieces, only aſk himſelf, whether he would approve ſuch a performance if written by a modern poet; I fear he will find that much of his applauſe proceeds merely from the ſound of a name and an empty veneration for antiquity. In fact, the revival of thoſe pieces of forced humour, far fetched conceit, and unnatural hyperbole, which have been aſcribed to Shakeſpear, is rather gibbetting than raiſing a ſtatue to his memory; it is rather a trick of the actor, who thinks it ſafeſt acting in exaggerated characters, and who, by out-ſtepping nature, chuſes to exhibit the ridiculous outré of an harlequin under the ſanction of that venerable name.

to inform us that it was compoſed by Shakeſpear, or old Ben, or ſomebody elſe, who took them for his model. A face of iron could not have the aſſurance to avow diſlike; the theatre has its partizans who underſtand the force of combinations, trained up to vociferation, clapping of hands, and clattering of ſticks; and though a man might have ſtrength ſufficient to overcome a lion in ſingle combat, he may run the riſk of being devoured by an army of ants.

I AM not inſenſible that third nights are diſagreeable draw-backs upon the annual profits of the ſtage; I am confident, it is much more to the manager's advantage to furbiſh up all the lumber, which the good ſenſe of our anceſtors, but for his care, had conſigned to oblivion; it is not with him therefore, but with the public I would expoſtulate;

leaſt, he has no right to be called a conjuror.

From all that has been ſaid upon the ſtate of our theatre, we may eaſily foreſee, whether it is likely to improve or decline; and whether the free-born muſe can bear to ſubmit to thoſe reſtrictions, which avarice or power would impoſe. For the future, it is ſomewhat unlikely, that he whoſe labours are valuable, or who knows their value, will turn to the ſtage for either fame or ſubſiſtence, when he muſt at once flatter an actor, and pleaſe an audience.

CHAP.

t landed at the Brille reſem-
a puppet-ſhew; carries his
m one miracle to another;
et of curioſities, to that col-
ures; but wondering is not
w wiſe.

reſolutions we ſet ourſelves
npany with our countrymen
all find them broken when
home. Among ſtrangers,
urſelves as in a ſolitude, and
l to deſire ſociety.

great towns of Europe, there
d Engliſhmen reſiding either
r choice; theſe generally lead
ued debauchery; ſuch are the
coun-

fortune, but the experiment would be too dangerous for young men.

THERE are many things relative to other countries, which can be learned to more advantage at home; their laws and policies are among the number.

THE greateſt advantages which reſult to youth from travel, is an eaſy addreſs, the ſhaking off national prejudices, and the finding nothing ridiculous in national peculiarities. The time ſpent in theſe acquiſitions, could have been more uſefully employed at home. An education in a college ſeems, therefore, preferable.

WE attribute to univerſities either too much or too little. Some aſſert, that they are the only proper places to advance learning;

riſing generation uncertainties for truth; thus, though the profeſſors in univerſities have been too frequently found to oppoſe the advancement of learning; yet, when once eſtabliſhed, they are the propereſt perſons to diffuſe it.

THERE is more knowledge to be acquired from one page of the volume of mankind, if the ſcholar only knows how to read, than in volumes of antiquity; we grow learned, not wiſe, by too long a continuance at college.

THIS points out the time in which we ſhould leave the univerſity; perhaps, the age of twenty-one, when at our univerſities the firſt degree is generally taken, is the proper period.

ſcholaſtic philoſophy are ſuppreſſed, and where the firſt degree is taken after four years matriculation. Such are Oxford, Cambridge, and Dublin.

As for the firſt claſs, their abſurdities are too apparent to admit of a parallel. It is diſputed which of the two laſt are moſt conducive to national improvement.

SKILL in the profeſſions is acquired more by practice than ſtudy, two or three years may be ſufficient for learning their rudiments. The univerſities of Edinburgh, &c. grant a licence for practiſing them, when the ſtudent thinks proper, which our univerſities refuſe till after a reſidence of ſeveral years.

THE

THE dignity of the profeſſions may be ſupported by this dilatory proceeding; but many men of learning are thus too long excluded from the lucrative advantages which ſuperior ſkill has a right to expect.

THOSE univerſities muſt certainly be moſt frequented, who promiſe to give, in two years, the advantages which others will not under twelve.

THE man who has ſtudied a profeſſion for three years, and practiſed it for nine more, will certainly know more of his buſineſs, than he who has only ſtudied it for twelve.

THE univerſities of Edinburgh, &c. muſt certainly be moſt proper for the ſtudy of thoſe profeſſions, in which men chuſe

to turn their learning to profit as ſoon as poſſible.

THE univerſities of Oxford, &c. are improper for this, ſince they keep the ſtudent from the world, which, after a certain time, is the only true ſchool of improvement.

WHEN a degree in the profeſſions can be taken only by men of independent fortunes, the number of candidates in learning is leſſened, and conſequently the advancement of learning retarded.

THIS ſlowneſs of conferring degrees is a remnant of ſcholaſtic barbarity. Paris, Louvain, and thoſe univerſities which ſtill retain their antient inſtitutions, confer the doctor's degree ſooner than we.

THE ſtatutes of every univerſity ſhould be conſidered as adapted to the laws of its reſpective government. Thoſe ſhould alter as theſe happen to fluctuate.

FOUR years ſpent in the arts (as they are called in colleges) is, perhaps, laying too laborious a foundation. Entering a profeſſion without any previous acquiſitions of this kind is building too bold a ſuperſtructure.

TEACHING by lecture, as at Edinburgh, may make men ſcholars, if they think proper; but inſtructing by examination, as at Oxford, will make them ſo, often againſt their inclination.

EDINBURGH only diſpoſes the ſtudent to receive learning; Oxford often makes him actually learned.

In a word, were I poor, I ſhould ſend my ſon to Leyden, or Edinburgh, though the annual expence in either, particularly in the firſt, is very great. Were I rich, I would ſend him to one of our own univerſities.' By an education received in the firſt, he has the beſt likelihood of living; by that received in the latter, he has the beſt chance of becoming great.

We have of late heard much of the neceſſity of ſtudying oratory. Veſpaſian was the firſt who paid profeſſors of rhetoric, for publickly inſtructing youth at Rome. However, thoſe pedants never made an orator.

The beſt orations that ever were ſpoken, were pronounced in the parliaments of

of King Charles the Firſt. Theſe men never ſtudied the rules of oratory.

MATHEMATICS are, perhaps, too much ſtudied at our univerſities. This ſeems a ſcience, to which the meaneſt intellects are equal. I forget who it is that ſays, "All men might underſtand mathematics, "if they would."

THE moſt methodical manner of lecturing, whether on morals or nature, is firſt rationally to explain, and then produce the experiment. The moſt inſtructive method is, to ſhew the experiment firſt; curioſity is then excited, and attention awakened to every ſubſequent deduction. From hence it is evident, that, in a well-formed education, a courſe of hiſtory ſhould ever precede a courſe of ethics.

THE ſons of our nobility are permitted to enjoy greater liberties in our univerſities, than thoſe of private men. I ſhould bluſh to aſk the men of learning and virtue, who preſide in our ſeminaries, the reaſon of ſuch a prejudicial diſtinction. Our youth ſhould there be inſpired with a love of philoſophy: and the firſt maxim among philoſophers is, that merit only makes diſtinction.

WHENCE has proceeded the vain magnificence of expenſive architecture in our colleges? Is it, that men ſtudy to more advantage in a palace than in a cell? One ſingle performance of taſte, or genius, confers more real honours on its parent univerſity, than all the labours of the chiſſel.

SURE,

SURE pride itſelf has dictated to the fellows of our colleges the abſurd paſſion of being attended at meals, and on other public occaſions, by thoſe poor men, who, willing to be ſcholars, come in upon ſome charitable foundation. It implies a contradiction, for men to be at once learning the *liberal* arts, and at the ſame time treated as *ſlaves*; at once ſtudying freedom, and practiſing ſervitude.

CHAP. XIV.

The CONCLUSION.

EVERY ſubject acquires an adventitious importance to him who conſiders it with application. He finds it more cloſely connected with human happineſs, than the reſt of mankind are apt to allow; he ſees conſequences reſulting from it, which do not ſtrike others with equal conviction; and, ſtill purſuing ſpeculation beyond the bounds of reaſon, too frequently becomes ridiculouſly earneſt in trifles, or abſurdity.

IT will, pehaps, be incurring this imputation, to deduce an univerſal degeneracy of manners, from ſo ſlight an origin

as

as the depravation of taſte; to aſſert, that, as a nation grows dull, it ſinks into debauchery. Yet ſuch, probably, may be the conſequence of literary decay; or, not to ſtretch the thought beyond what it will bear, vice and ſtupidity are always mutually productive of each other.

LIFE, at the greateſt and beſt, has been compared to a froward child, that muſt be humoured, and played with, till it falls aſleep, and then all the care is over. Our few years are laboured away in varying its pleaſures; new amuſements are purſued with ſtudious attention; the moſt childiſh vanities are dignified with titles of importance; and the proudeſt boaſt of the moſt aſpiring philoſopher is no more, than that he provides his little play-fellows the greateſt paſtime with the greateſt innocence.

THUS

THUS the mind, ever wandering after amuſement, when abridged of happineſs on one part, endeavours to find it on another; when intellectual pleaſures are diſagreeable, thoſe of ſenſe will take the lead. The man, who, in this age, is enamoured of the tranquil joys of ſtudy and retirement, may, in the next, ſhould learning be faſhionable no longer, feel an ambition of being foremoſt at an horſe-courſe; or, if ſuch could be the abſurdity of the times, of being himſelf a jockey. Reaſon and appetite are therefore maſters of our revels in turn; and, as we incline to the one, or purſue the other, we rival angels, or imitate the brutes. In the purſuit of intellectual pleaſure lies every virtue; of ſenſual, every vice.

IT is this difference of purſuit which marks the morals and characters of mankind;

kind; which lays the line between the enlightened philoſopher and the half-taught citizen; between the civil citizen and the illiterate peaſant; between the law-obeying peaſant, and the wandering ſavage of Africa, an animal leſs miſchievous indeed than the tiger, becauſe endued with fewer powers of doing miſchief. The man, the nation, muſt therefore be good, whoſe chiefeſt luxuries conſiſt in the refinement of reaſon: and reaſon can never be univerſally cultivated, unleſs guided by Taſte, which may be conſidered as the link between ſcience and common-ſenſe, the medium through which learning ſhould ever be ſeen by ſociety.

Taste will, therefore, often be a proper ſtandard, when others fail, to judge of a nation's improvement, or degeneracy, in

in morals. We have often no permanent characteriſtics by which to compare the virtues or the vices of our anceſtors with our own. A generation may riſe and paſs away, without leaving any traces of what it really was; and all complaints of our deterioration may be only topics of declamation, or the cavillings of diſappointment: but in Taſte we have ſtanding evidence; we can, with preciſion, compare the literary performances of our fathers with our own, and, from their excellence or defects, determine the moral, as well as the literary, merits of either.

If, then, there ever comes a time, when Taſte is ſo far depraved among us, that critics ſhall load every work of genius with unneceſſary comment, and quarter their empty performances with the ſubſtantial

ſtantial merit of an author, both for ſubſiſtence and applauſe; if there comes a time, when cenſure ſhall ſpeak in ſtorms, but praiſe be whiſpered in the breeze, while real excellence often finds ſhipwreck in either; if there be a time, when the Muſe ſhall ſeldom be heard, except in plaintive elegy, as if ſhe wept her own decline, while lazy compilations ſupply the place of original thinking; ſhould there ever be ſuch a time, may ſucceeding critics, both for the honour of our morals, as well as our learning, ſay, that ſuch a period bears no reſemblance to the preſent age!

F I N I S.

ENGLISH
OXFORD
LIBRARY